

**STRATEGY
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**CUBA AFTER CASTRO; WHAT POLICY BEST SERVES U.S.
NATIONAL INTERESTS?**

BY

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Michael S. Rose Lieutenant Colonel, USA
TITLE: Cuba After Castro; What Policy Best Serves U.S. National Interests?
FORMAT: Strategy Research Project
DATE: 09 April 2002 **PAGES:** 27 **CLASSIFICATION:** Unclassified

There is presently an Ends – Ways mismatch in U.S. Policy towards Cuba. Current policy is not creating the conditions necessary for transition to a democratic government and respect for human rights after Castro's departure. This research paper explores and examines alternatives to current U.S. policy in Cuba, then analyzes and compares these policy options using national interests as a framework. The research paper concludes with a recommended policy that decreases pressure on the Castro regime through a policy of "full engagement." This policy consists of complete and unilateral lifting of all trade and economic sanctions against Cuba and an end to Cuba's diplomatic isolation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
CUBA AFTER CASTRO; WHAT POLICY BEST SERVES U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS?	1
THE PROBLEM.....	1
BACKGROUND	2
U.S. – CUBA RELATIONS FROM THE 1800 TO 1959	2
THE CASTRO ERA 1959 TO THE PRESENT	3
THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF CURRENT U.S. POLICY TOWARDS CUBA.....	4
SIGNIFICANCE	5
POLICY OPTIONS	6
THE HARD-LINE APPROACH – INCREASING PRESSURE	7
PRESENT APPROACH – CONTINUE CURRENT U.S. POLICY.....	8
A STRATEGY OF ENGAGEMENT – DECREASE PRESSURE	9
COMPARISON OF POLICY OPTIONS	10
U.S. INTERESTS IN CUBA	10
VITAL INTEREST	11
EXTREMELY IMPORTANT INTERESTS	12
IMPORTANT INTERESTS.....	13
RECOMMENDATION.....	14
ENDNOTES	17
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	21

CUBA AFTER CASTRO; WHAT POLICY BEST SERVES U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS?

THE PROBLEM

Current U.S. policy towards Cuba does not appear to be moving Cuba towards the stated U.S. goals of a peaceful transition to a stable, democratic form of government and respect for human rights on the island nation.¹ By all indications U.S. policy towards Cuba is still mired in the Cold War policies of trade and economic sanctions coupled with diplomatic isolation. Secretary of State Colin Powell in testimony to the Senate in March of 2001 "ruled out the possibility of lifting the four-decade-old embargo on Cuba while President Fidel Castro is in power." He also added "any lifting of the sanctions against the island would only lead to the strengthening of the regime."²

While it appears that the U.S. has a clear vision of the conditions and environment it desires in Cuba, by many reports current U.S. policy is not creating the conditions necessary for transition to a democratic government and respect for human rights. In the strategic parlance there is an ends ways mismatch in U.S. policy towards Cuba. This ends ways mismatch becomes even more glaring when compared to U.S. policies vis-à-vis China and Vietnam. LTC David L. Mitchell clearly describes this mismatch in his Strategy Research Project "Sanctions Against Cuba: a Flawed U.S. Policy":

Their [China and Vietnam] record on democratic reform is no better. Both governments are still practicing Marxist doctrine, and have not held free elections since coming to power. Yet the U.S. engages Vietnam, and provides China with Most Favored Nation (MFN) status and a \$60 billion annual trade surplus. The U.S. also permits the sale of sophisticated computers to China and allows the proliferation of missile technology. The bottom line is that the Administration and Congress have detached human rights and democratic reform from commercial dealings with some totalitarian regimes, but not with Cuba. Where the U.S. government is highly concerned about the treatment of Cuban citizens, it ignores the rights of Chinese citizens in favor of access to their markets. Moreover, if trade is so essential for the spread of human rights and democracy, then why is the U.S. not experimenting with this type of approach in Cuba?

This ends ways mismatch is created by the dilemma faced by every administration since the Kennedy administration imposed the initial embargo against Cuba in 1960.

The dilemma for successive U.S. policy makers is how to undermine the Castro regime and bring about the desired transition without doing harm to Cuba's general population. The current State Department fact sheet on Cuba states, "Support for the Cuban people is the central theme of our policy. New measures will increase this support without strengthening the

government.” It appears to the outside observer that the U.S. government has formulated much of its policy towards Cuba based on its personal dislike of Fidel Castro.

With Castro’s increasing age and the possibility of health problems as reported this summer it becomes more critical that the U.S adopt a policy that will set the conditions for accomplishing its goals upon Fidel Castro’s death or disability. Castro’s passing from the scene is an increasingly likely scenario within the next 10 years, since Castro is close to the life expectancy in Cuba of 76.³

BACKGROUND

U.S. – CUBA RELATIONS FROM THE 1800 TO 1959

The 1800s was a period of increasing prosperity for the Spanish colony of Cuba, much of Cuba’s prosperity was fueled by trade with the United States. From 1832 to 1843 there were several slave uprisings in Cuba all of them were brutally suppressed by Spanish forces and militia loyal to the Spanish crown. Also from 1848 to 1851 there were three separate efforts to annex Cuba to the U.S. There was very little support for such an annexation in the U.S. outside of the Southern States. The slave states versus free states debate was raging in the U.S. and the addition of another slave territory was not politically feasible.

Cuban nationalists fought two wars of independence against Spain from 1868 to 1880. Ultimately the Cuban nationalists were defeated in 1880, but the cause of Cuban independence remained strong and the stage was set for the Cuban War of Independence that occurred 15 years later.

Cuba’s War of Independence began on February 24, 1895 and ended August 12, 1898 with the surrender of Spanish Forces to the U.S. ending the Spanish –Cuban – American War. In accordance with the treaty signed by Spain and the U.S., the U.S. installed a military government in Cuba on the same day the Spanish administration withdrew. The U.S. maintained a military government in Cuba until May 20, 1902. The U.S. only withdrew after Cuba ratified the Platt Amendment as a permanent addendum to the Cuban constitution. “The Platt Amendment represented a permanent restriction upon Cuban self-determination.”⁴ The Platt Amendment provided that:

Cuba should not sign any treaties that could impair its sovereignty or contract any debts that could not be repaid by normal revenues. In addition, Cuba had to accept the legitimacy of all acts of the military government, permit the United States to purchase or lease lands for coaling and naval stations, and give the United States special privileges to intervene at any time to preserve Cuban independence or to support a government capable of protecting life, property, and individual liberties.⁵

The Platt Amendment was repealed in 1934. However, in a separate treaty negotiated in 1903 the U.S. acquired rights in perpetuity to the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay which it still retains.

From 1903 to 1959 the political and economic life of Cuba was closely associated with the U.S. Cuba's experiment in democracy was plagued by corruption, fraudulent elections, coups and dictatorships. The U.S. involved itself in Cuban politics on a recurring basis and used military forces on a number of occasions. The main thrust of U.S. policy during this period was to insure a favorable trade and investment climate for U.S. citizens.

THE CASTRO ERA 1959 TO THE PRESENT

When Fidel Castro and the revolutionary elite assumed power on New Year's Day 1959, they began a new era in U.S. – Cuban relations. Relations between the U.S. and Cuba from 1959 to the present have been marked by antagonism, tension, opposition, and hostility.

By the end of 1960 the Cuban government had nationalized all foreign and most large Cuban enterprises. In May 1960 Cuba and the Soviet Union established diplomatic and economic ties. The U.S. sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion was crushed in April 1961 and Castro declared himself a Marxist-Leninist, stating that the Cuban revolution was socialist in nature the same year.

"Castro's acquiescence to Soviet wishes to install nuclear missiles in Cuba proved near-disastrous, as the Soviet Union and Castro himself brought the whole world to the edge of a nuclear war."⁶ After the missile crisis relations between the U.S. and Cuba were tense at best and remained that way throughout the 1960's.

There was a slight improvement in relations between the U.S. and Cuba during the first half of the 1970's. However, by 1976 the tension between the U.S. and Cuba returned due to actions by Cuba and U.S. reluctance to control Cuban exile groups.

During the first two years of President Carter's administration there was a thawing of U.S. – Cuba relations. In 1977 the U.S. and Cuba opened small diplomatic missions known as "interests sections" in each others capitals. The influx of Cuban immigrants from the Mariel boat lift in 1980 caused a cooling of relations. However, these "interests sections" remain in operation today and are the main conduits for U.S. – Cuban dialog.

Relations cooled even further in 1981 when the Reagan administration took office. They "perceived the Castro regime as a proxy of the Soviet Union and the source of much of the unrest that had plagued Central America ..."⁷ The 1980's and early 1990's witnessed continued tension and antagonism between the U.S. and Cuba.

Since the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1989 Cuba has experienced a fundamental change in its economy and foreign relations. "Between 1989 and 1992 the Cuban Gross Domestic Product had declined by between 34 and 51 percent."⁸ While the Cuban government has halted the downward spiral of the economy, recent reports indicated that the Cuban economy has still not returned to 1990 levels.⁹

THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF CURRENT U.S. POLICY TOWARDS CUBA

Current U.S. policy towards Cuba is based on trade and economic sanctions coupled with diplomatic isolation. The trade and economic sanctions started in 1960 after Cuba signed a trade pact with the Soviet Union. This trade pact basically bartered Cuban sugar for Soviet oil. In retaliation the U.S. State Department recommended that U.S oil companies in Cuba refuse to refine Soviet oil. The U.S oil companies refusal to refine Soviet oil prompted Castro to nationalize all U.S property in Cuba. In 1962 the value of the U.S. property in Cuba was valued at 1 billion dollars. The nationalization of U.S. assets in Cuba and the strident nature of Castro's Cuba prompted the Kennedy Administration to initiate a full trade embargo against Cuba in 1962. Additionally, in 1962 Cuba was suspended from participation by the Organization of American States (OAS) because of Cuban support for insurgents in Venezuela.

The trade and economic sanctions against Cuba are presently codified in the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Solidarity Act signed into law in 1996 by President Clinton. This law is commonly referred to as the Helms-Burton Act after its two congressional sponsors. This law is the latest in a procession of statutes that have attempted to legislate U.S policy towards Cuba. The Helms-Burton Act is composed of four sections or titles. Title III is the most controversial of the four sections and has yet to be implemented by the executive branch. As President Clinton did for his entire second term, President Bush extended the suspension of Title III for another 6 months effective July 16 of 2000.

Title I is composed of an enumeration of all embargo restrictions that were in effect on 1 March of 1996. Prior to the codification of these restrictions, sanctions against Cuba were implemented by executive fiat in the form of executive orders. With the enactment of the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Solidarity Act any change to the economic sanctions against Cuba now requires a majority in Congress.

Title II of the Helms-Burton Act charges the president with developing a plan to assist a post-Castro government that is democratic in nature. This title includes requirements and factors to assist the president in determining if a transition to democracy is in fact underway.

Some of these factors are: release of political prisoners, unfettered political activity, and free and fair elections without Fidel Castro or his younger brother Raul.

As mentioned previously Title III is the most controversial piece of the Act and has yet to be implemented. Title III provides for "creation of a private right of action in U.S. courts that allow U.S. nationals whose property was confiscated by the Cuban government to sue Cuban governmental entities or foreign investors who use or profit in any way from those properties."¹⁰ This title if implemented could cause a serious rift with most of our international partners and commendation by the world community, who see it as heavy-handed and extraterritorial in nature. Implementation of Title III could lead to legal, diplomatic and trade countermeasures against the U.S. by many countries.

Title IV is closely linked to Title III it authorizes "the denial of visas and entry into the U.S. of individuals who traffic in U.S. claimed properties in Cuba after March 12, 1996, and their immediate family members, as well as corporate officers and controlling shareholders of entities which traffic in such properties."¹¹ The State Department has rarely invoked this title and it can be argued is of no impact in enforcing the U.S. trade and economic sanctions against Cuba. Also, as with Title III it leaves U.S. citizens and businessmen open to retaliation by other countries.

Current U.S. policy is little changed since President Kennedy's initial sanctions and embargo were put in effect nearly 40 years ago. I believe that current U.S. policy is summarized best by using a quote from a recent CATO Institute, Policy Analysis paper:

"Current U.S. policy toward Cuba is based on historical inertia, domestic political calculations and emotionalism. The embargo will continue to be ineffective-especially given dwindling support for the policy, the ease with which Cuba gets around the sanctions, and the ways in which Cuba has been adapting to changing world conditions."

SIGNIFICANCE

Solely based on Cuba's proximity to the U.S. and its large population, the problems in Cuba could be significant. The north coast of Cuba is only 90 miles south of Key West, Florida. The nation's population is (11 million) and Cuba is the largest country in the Caribbean.

The coming crisis in Cuba is not something the U.S. government can ignore and hope it goes away. U.S. security and foreign policy considerations coupled with domestic considerations will cause the U.S. government to face the "Cuba Problem" sooner or later. And the sooner the U.S. government implements policies to shape the environment after Castro's departure the less severe the crisis will be when this inevitable event occurs.

A crisis in Cuba and the resulting requirement for military forces could put the current war against "terrorism with a global reach" at risk. Due to the down sizing of the U.S. Armed Forces it is highly unlikely we could control complete chaos in Cuba and still have sufficient forces to continue a robust war on global terrorism. Additionally the emergence of a "failed state" only 90 miles from the U.S. could provide international terrorist with a staging base in close proximity to the U.S. The U.S. government could not allow this for long and would be forced to take strong action.

This is not only a U.S. problem, the chaos created by a cataclysmic end of the Castro regime could have repercussions throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. Cuban migrations, arms smuggling, and narcotrafficking would hit the less developed and fragile democracies of the region especially hard.

U.S. domestic politics will almost certainly be affected by how the U.S. responds to a Cuban crisis. Cuban-Americans are a well organized and financed political force, that will work hard to influence the U.S. response to any Cuban crisis. Another aspect to consider in a Cuban crisis is the possibility of Cuban-Americans taking advantage of the instability to return to Cuba to reclaim property, settle old scores or both. Forcefully preventing Cuban-Americans; most whom are U.S. citizens, from returning to Cuba during a period of instability could be laden with legal problems. The depth of these desires can be seen in a report by the British Broadcasting Corporation when Castro fainted during a speech in July of 2001. "...many exiles believe that after Mr. Castro is gone, they will automatically be able to return to Cuba – and hope they will be able to renew old acquaintances with relatives and reclaim property left behind after the revolution."¹²

Equally important is how the U.S. population as a whole views U.S. involvement in Cuba. There will most likely be tremendous pressure for the U.S. government to do something as evidenced by events in Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, and Kosovo.

POLICY OPTIONS

If current U.S. policy towards Cuba is pushing Cuba in an undesired direction with consequences detrimental to the Cuban people and U.S. National Interests, then what are the options? Current literature on U.S. policy towards Cuba generally puts forth three options: increase the pressure on the Castro regime; continue current U.S. policy towards Cuba; or decrease the pressure on the Castro regime. A branch under the decreased pressure option mentioned by some authors is the selective easing of the economic embargo.¹³ A recent example of this approach is the shipment of 200,000 tons of U.S. wheat, corn, soybeans, rice

and chicken to Cuba in the aftermath of Hurricane Michelle. The first direct trade between the U.S. and Cuba since 1962.¹⁴

THE HARD-LINE APPROACH – INCREASING PRESSURE

Increasing the pressure on the Castro regime often referred to, as the hard-line approach is the least discussed option in the available literature on U.S. policy towards Cuba. This approach primarily deals with attempting to tighten-up the very porous trade and economic sanctions along with redoubling efforts to isolate Cuba diplomatically. Complete implementation of all Titles of the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Solidarity Act would conceivable be the first step in this more strident approach towards Cuba. Full implementation of the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Solidarity Act would encounter substantial adverse reaction from the international community. The act is viewed as “extraterritorial” and in violation of international law by almost all nations and international organizations, the European Union, Organization of American States, and United Nations have all condemned the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Act.¹⁵ Even the Pope has called for the lifting of U.S. economic sanctions against Cuba calling them, “oppressive, unjust and ethically unacceptable.” The unfavorable reaction of the international community is one of the reasons both Democratic and Republic administrations have suspended enforcement of the acts most onerous provisions.

If international political and diplomatic realities make the implementation of the hard-line approach unlikely, what are the domestic implications of a hard-line approach? Much of the U.S. population appears ambivalent about U.S policy towards Cuba. This was succinctly observed by General (Retired) Charles Wilhelm in his report on a recent trip to Cuba when he remarked, “My blunt appraisal was that many residents of Topeka, Kansas, aren’t sure exactly where Cuba is and have no real appreciation for the importance of a 500 mile long island with a population that is less than the city of Los Angeles.”¹⁶ However, Cuban Americans have strong views on U.S. policy towards Cuba even if their views are schizophrenic in nature. “Cuban Americans who support the embargo much more widely than any other group in the United States, also violate it most frequently and significantly. By sending remittances to the island they always violate the embargo’s spirit and sometimes violate its legal restrictions as well.”¹⁷ Cuban Americans send an estimated \$800 million annually to family and friends in Cuba.¹⁸

An additional consideration in increasing the pressure on the Castro regime would be its affect on the domestic situation inside of Cuba. In the past Castro has used increased U.S. pressure as an excuse to crack-down on internal dissent. After passage of the Cuban Liberty and Democracy Act in 1996 Castro cracked-down on dissidents and suppressed any opposition

in Cuba. "This in turn stymied modest reforms and brought about additional hardship on the Cuban people."¹⁹

Since the general U.S. population appears unconcerned about U.S policy towards Cuba and the Cuban American population while supporting the rhetoric of a hard-line against the Castro regime "are the most consistent violators of the spirit and sometime the letter of the sanctions"²⁰ there appears to be little domestic political incentive for the U.S. government to institute a hard-line approach. Therefore, the substantial international backlash against the hard-line approach coupled with detrimental effects on the domestic Cuban situation and lack of a clear domestic consensus in favor of tougher sanctions vitiate against increasing pressure on the Castro regime at this time.

PRESENT APPROACH – CONTINUE CURRENT U.S. POLICY

The current U.S. policy towards Cuba is a combination of trade and economic sanctions coupled with diplomatic isolation. Successive U.S. presidential administrations since President Eisenhower's have maintained this pattern of U.S policy towards Cuba. The present administration was quick to signal its support for the continuation of the current U.S. policy of economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation for Cuba. Shortly after assuming his office, Secretary of State Colin Powell testifying before Congress ruled out the possibility of lifting the four-decade-old embargo on Cuba while President Fidel Castro is in power.²¹

As discussed above the keystone of present U.S.-Cuba policy is the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996. This Act is unique in that it is unusual for Congress to so limit the Executive branch's options when dealing with another country. By codifying U.S.-Cuban relations into law current policy is given greater stasis. And given the general U.S population's disinterest in U.S.-Cuban policy as previously noted and the Cuban Americans apparent propensity towards punishing the Castro regime there is little domestic political incentive to change U.S.-Cuba policy.

This does not mean however, that the current policy is not without critics. Most serious examinations of current policy discuss its shortfalls and provide some recommendations for improvement. Ambassador Craig Johnstone of the U.S. Chamber of Congress speaks to the business communities frustrations with current policy when he writes, "Unilateral sanctions are the result of failed foreign policy – the last resort of politicians who have given up trying to actually do something about a problem and are looking only to posture."²² According to estimates by the U.S. International Trade Commission, U.S. companies may be losing out on as much as \$1.2 billion worth of business in Cuba each year. Dr. Donald Schulz of the U.S. Army

War College Strategic Studies Institute sums up the criticism of many when he writes, "In short, threats, isolation and punishment are not the way to promote change in Cuba. They will however, aggravate the current crisis and prolong Cuba's agony."²³

If current U.S. policy towards Cuba "is 80 to 90 percent domestic politics and has nothing to do with realities in Cuba or whether the policy has any realistic prospect of bringing about the democracy or peaceful transition Washington says it supports"²⁴ then it may be time for an alternate policy. Decreasing pressure on the Castro regime through a policy of engagement is an alternative policy recommended by some authors.

A STRATEGY OF ENGAGEMENT – DECREASE PRESSURE

Decreasing pressure on the Castro regime through a policy of engagement could take two paths as recommended by LTC David L. Mitchell in his Strategy Research Project, "Sanctions Against Cuba: A Flawed U.S. Policy." LTC Mitchell recommends a selective relaxation of the current trade and economic sanctions which he calls "constructive engagement" or a complete end of the current trade and economic sanctions which he calls "full engagement." Various exponents of these alternatives to the present U.S. policy have been put forth by numerous authors over the years.

"Constructive engagement" or the "enticement approach"²⁵ involves selective relaxation of the trade and economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation. "Constructive engagement would trade tangible benefits for the Castro regime with movement by the regime in areas deemed important by the U.S. An example of this approach could be U.S. suspension of Radio Marti broadcasts in exchange for moves toward democratization in Cuba – a stated U.S objective. This approach could ultimately lead to a complete removal of trade and economic sanctions along with eliminating Cuban diplomatic isolation. However, each relaxation in sanctions or isolation would be contingent upon Cuba reciprocating with moves towards the stated U.S. objectives in Cuba. These objectives according to the U.S. State Department are: "to promote a peaceful transition to a stable democratic form of government and respect for human rights... and working to aid the development of civil society in the country."²⁶ Implementation of this approach would initially require the suspension of some provisions of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act and if followed to its ultimate conclusion repeal of the Act. The advantage of this approach is once initiated by the U.S. it only proceeds if Cuba is forthcoming with reciprocal advances and can be terminated at any point by the U.S. if Cuba is not forthcoming. Unlike the "full engagement" approach where the U.S. gives up arguably its

greatest bargaining tool trade and economic sanctions the "constructive engagement" approach retains the United States' strongest bargaining tool.

"Full engagement" or the "soft-line"²⁷ approach consists of completely and unilaterally lifting all trade and economic sanctions against Cuba and ending its diplomatic isolation.

Jonathan Clarke and William Ratliff of the CATO Institute make the following recommendations:²⁸

- adopt the logic of U.S. policy toward China that the best way of achieving reform in Cuba is through engagement, including the revocation of all legislation currently constituting the economic embargo in its many ramifications and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Cuban government.
- withdraw existing U.S. government funding, through whatever form of NGO subterfuge, of activities that are clearly an interference in the domestic affairs of Cuba and reject the proposed \$100 million increase in funding for such activities; truly private support for such groups would not be a matter of government policy; and
- remove restrictions on visits by Americans to Cuba and Cubans to the United States.

This approach is unilateral on the United State's part and completely independent of any reciprocal actions by Cuba. As stated by Clarke and Ratliff "full engagement" requires the repeal of all legislation constituting the embargo to include the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act.

Decreasing the pressure on the Castro regime through engagement has a number of advantages whether through "constructive or full engagement" First, it would return the U.S. back to a position regarding Cuba that is in line with much of the rest of the world and all international organizations. This approach would also take away one of Castro's pillars of support, that is the claim that he is defending Cuban nationalism from Yankee aggression in the form of trade and economic sanctions. "Over the years, he has been highly successful in manipulating the specter of the 'Yankee threat' to mobilize his countrymen behind his leadership and policies. In effect, successive American administrations... have repeatedly played into his hands by enabling him to wrap himself in the cloak of besieged nationalism."²⁹

COMPARISON OF POLICY OPTIONS

U.S. INTERESTS IN CUBA

The current administration has not published a National Security Strategy so in lieu of a formal National Security Strategy I have elected to use America's National Interests: A Report

from the Commission on America's National Interest, 2000. This report was put together in July of 2000 by a commission that included several people who are now prominent members of the current Bush administration. President Bush's National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage as well as current and former Senators and Ambassadors were members of the commission. I feel it is a safe prediction that much of the substance of America's National Interests: A Report from the Commission on America's National Interest, 2000 will find its way into the Bush National Security Strategy.

The report lays out three broad categories of National Interests: Vital, Extremely Important and Important. According to the report from the Commission on America's National Interests 2000, of vital interest to the U.S. is preventing the emergence of failed states on U.S borders. As observed earlier this is a possibility in Cuba depending on the severity of the situation after Castro's departure.

Additionally the report lists three extremely important national interests that apply to Cuba. First, is the necessity for the U.S. to promote democracy, prosperity, and stability in the Western Hemisphere. Second and an area where the U.S. has considerable abominable experience with Cuba is preventing massive, uncontrolled immigration across U.S. borders. Lastly of utmost relevancy to the U.S. today is suppressing terrorism (especially state-sponsored terrorism), transnational crime, and drug trafficking.

The report goes on to elucidate four more areas where the U.S. has important interests in Cuba. They are: discourage massive human rights violations in foreign countries, reduce the economic gap between rich and poor countries, prevent the nationalization of U.S.-owned assets abroad, and maximize U.S. Gross National Product growth from international trade and investment.

Using U.S. national interests in Cuba as criteria to evaluate the three strategies for U.S policy towards Cuba should yield the policy that best meets U.S. national security requirements.

VITAL INTEREST

In determining which strategy for U.S. policy towards Cuba best meets the vital national interest of preventing the emergence of failed states on U.S. borders it is fairly obvious that the hard-line strategy is the least likely to succeed. By pushing the Castro regime to the edge and causing chaos and lose of internal control; the likely outcome of the hard-line approach, the emergence of a failed state is more probable. This also runs counter to the stated U.S. goal of promoting a peaceful transition to a stable democratic government in Cuba. Likewise continuing the current strategy of trade and economic sanctions along with diplomatic isolation has yielded

minimal results over the last 40 years and does not appear to be the best course of action. Dr. Schulz commenting on U.S.-Cuban policy writes, "Put bluntly, we have strengthened the regime and made a peaceful transition to democracy even more difficult."³⁰ With 40 years of history as evidence it is clear the current U.S.-Cuba policy while keeping Castro in power is not setting the conditions for the type of Cuba we want to see after his departure. With this in mind it seems clear that a strategy of engagement similar to our relations with North Korea, Vietnam, and China would best accomplish the stated U.S. vital interest of preventing the emergence of a failed state on U.S. borders.

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT INTERESTS

In looking at the three extremely important national interests that apply to Cuba it seems obvious that a strategy of engagement would be the most likely to secure these interests. The first extremely important interest to promote democracy, prosperity, and stability in the Western Hemisphere has not been advanced by the current policy. In fact Castro took the occasion of the passage of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act to reign in dissidents in Cuba. According to dissidents inside of Cuba, "The embargo, which all [dissidents] opposed is a benefit to the hard-liners in the government and Fidel Castro in particular, since U.S. policy is a scapegoat for their own errors and crimes."³¹ Also if one accepts the premise that the hard-line/increased pressure approach runs the very real danger of pushing Castro and Cuba over the precipice and into chaos resulting in the collapse of civil authority then this strategy is not acceptable.

Next on the list of extremely important national interests is preventing massive uncontrolled immigration across U.S. borders. Once more history demonstrates that current U.S.-Cuban policy has failed regarding this extremely important interest with massive immigration from Cuba occurring several times over the last 40 years. In the past Castro has used immigration as a safety valve to ensure the stability of his regime. Given this fact Castro could again use immigration as a means to reduce internal pressure or given the dreadful scenario of total chaos resulting from the hard-line approach lose complete control of people fleeing the repression and poverty in Cuba. Building a democratic, prosperous and stable Cuba through a strategy of engagement is certainly the best means of preventing massive uncontrolled immigration from Cuba.

The final extremely important national interest that is relevant to Cuba is suppressing terrorism (especially state sponsored terrorism), transnational crime, and drug trafficking. The hard-line strategy with the possibility of chaos and even a failed state would be the least

satisfactory approach. However, this is one area where current U.S.-Cuban policy has been somewhat successful. While there have been some reports of drug trafficking in the past, recent congressional testimony by the Drug Enforcement Agency indicates that Cuba is attempting to interdict drugs transiting Cuban waters or airspace and has signed agreements with several countries to stem the flow of illegal drugs.³² Cuba continues to be listed in the State Department report "Patterns of Global Terrorism 2000" but according to Clarke and Ratliff of the CATO Institute, "less on the ground of active involvement in contemporary terrorist activity than because it offers safe haven to ETA(Euskadi ta Askatasuna) fugitives and to representatives of the FARC and ELN."³³ In this extremely important national interest it is my judgment that current U.S.-Cuban policy and a strategy of engagement are about equally matched. A strategy of engagement resulting in expanded foreign trade could make Cuba more vulnerable to "international criminals seeking to establish new bases of operation for illegal activities, including drug trafficking,"³⁴ but would provide the U.S with possible mechanisms to assist Cuba in this area. Currently the U.S. is prohibited by Cuba from interdicting drug traffickers in its airspace or territorial waters and there is no cooperation between law enforcement agencies of the two countries.

IMPORTANT INTERESTS

There are four areas where the U.S. has important national interests in Cuba. They are discourage massive human rights violations, reduce the economic gap between rich and poor countries, prevent the nationalization of U.S. owned assets and maximize U.S. gross domestic product growth from international trade and investment. In all these areas with the exception of prevent the nationalization of U.S. owned assets a strategy of engagement would best serve these important national interests.

Based on reports from dissidents in Cuba; arguably the ones who have suffered the greatest human rights abuses under the Castro regime, a hard-line strategy or continuation of the current policy are the least desirable courses of action. At a gathering of dissidents in 1999 that coincided with the Iberoamerican summit in Havana, "some 90 percent called for the lifting of the embargo"³⁵

The best way to meet the important interest of reducing the economic gap between rich and poor countries would be through discontinuing the current policy of trade and economic sanctions and implementing a strategy of engagement. Inclusion of Cuba into the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) could be a starting point for a new strategy of engagement along with direct trade as seen recently after Hurricane Michelle.

As mentioned earlier the U.S. International Trade Commission estimates that "U.S. firms are losing out to foreign competition in an amount ranging anywhere from \$684 million to \$1.2 billion per annum."³⁶ It is abundantly clear that a strategy of engagement with Cuba would increase U.S. Gross Domestic Product and lead to the creation of jobs both in the U.S. and Cuba thus meeting multiple U.S. national interests.

The one area where a strategy of engagement may not necessarily succeed is the important national interest of preventing the nationalization of U.S.-owned assets abroad. Arguably many would see the U.S. abandonment of trade and economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation against Cuba as a defeat in this area. The original sanctions against Cuba were imposed in 1961 as a result of nationalization of U.S.-owned assets in Cuba. However, the counter argument can be made that the U.S.-Cuban policy of the last 40 years has not solved the impasse on this thorny issue either. Possibly a strategy of engagement could lead to the adjudication of this issue.

A comparison of the three proposed strategies using our vital, extremely important, and important national interests in Cuba as criteria yields a strategy of engagement as the unambiguous choice. In every national interest except preventing the nationalization of U.S.-owned assets a policy of engagement would yield results most favorable to our national interests. And while a strategy of engagement on this issue may not deter future nationalization of U.S.-owned assets it could as stated above lead to solving the impasse over this problem in Cuba. An issue that must eventually be resolved for normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba in any strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend decreasing the pressure on Cuba and the Castro regime through a policy of "full engagement." This policy consists of the complete and unilateral lifting of all trade and economic sanctions against Cuba and ending its diplomatic isolation. "Full engagement" best supports our national interests by beginning now to shape the kind of Cuba we want after Castro's death or departure from power. According to dissidents in Cuba, "It would be far better to begin the transition while Castro is still around, they said, for there is great frustration and hatred among the people."³⁷

This course of action would also bring U.S. policy towards Cuba back in consonance with world opinion and our international partner's foreign policies regarding Cuba. Additionally a new policy of "full engagement" would synchronize U.S. foreign policy by treating Cuba as the U.S. treats other communist regimes in North Korea, Vietnam, and China. It would also couple

President Bush's campaign rhetoric with his administration's policies. During the campaign he said: "I view free trade as an important ally in what Ronald Reagan called 'a forward strategy for freedom.' The case for trade is not just monetary, but moral. Economic freedom creates habits of liberty. And habits of liberty create expectations of democracy."³⁸

The added advantages of a policy of "full engagement" would be exposing Fidel Castro for the cruel dictator he is, along with the failed ideology of communism. It would take away the Castro regime's "all-purpose excuse for shortages arising from mismanagement and allows the regime to rally Cuban public opinion and even significant support around the world."³⁹

WORD COUNT= 6131

ENDNOTES

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